

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this Application and entry of this Amendment is respectfully requested. By this Amendment, claim 10 is amended and new claim 15 is added. Support for the amendments can be found throughout the specification as filed. See for example on page 8, the fourth sentence in paragraph [0029].

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claims 1-7 are allowed. Because claims 8-14 are also allowable for at least the reasons discussed below, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance.

The Office Action rejects claims 10-13 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Imran (U.S. Patent No. 5,853,419). This rejection is traversed as it may apply to the amended claims.

In particular, claim 10 has been amended to further define that that each of the plurality of longitudinal links attaches at its ends to adjacent main circumferential rings. In contrast, the asserted 'longitudinal links' in Imran do not attach at their ends to asserted adjacent 'main circumferential rings'. Thus, Imran does not teach (or suggest) each element of amended claim 10 and its dependent claims 11-13.

For at least the above reason, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 10-13 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) are respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 8-14 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Penn et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,217,608). This rejection is traversed.

Regarding claims 10-14, as discussed above, claim 10 has been amended to further define that that each of the plurality of longitudinal links attaches at its ends to adjacent main circumferential rings. In contrast, the asserted 'longitudinal links' in Penn et al. do not attach at their ends to asserted adjacent 'main circumferential rings'. Thus, Penn et al. do not teach (or suggest) each element of amended claim 10 and its dependent claims 11-14.

Regarding claims 8-9, Applicant takes this opportunity to note that a rejection of claims 8-9 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Penn et al. was first made in the May 27, 2004, Office Action, and withdrawn in the October 22, 2004, Office Action in response to Applicant's August 20, 2004, Amendment.

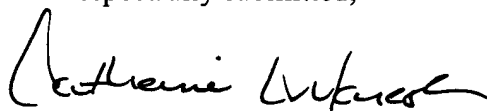
In any case, claims 8-9 require "a longitudinal link connecting said first main circumferential ring to said second main circumferential ring; and an intermediate circumferential ring disposed between said first main circumferential ring and said second main circumferential ring, wherein said intermediate circumferential ring includes a series of peaks, troughs and **mid band regions** between each peak and trough, wherein said intermediate circumferential ring is connected to said longitudinal link in at least one of the **mid band regions** of the intermediate circumferential ring..." The asserted longitudinal link of Penn et al. is clearly connected at the peak or trough and not at a mid band region therebetween, as required by present claims 8-9. Thus, Penn et al. does not teach (or suggest) each element of claims 8-9.

For at least the above reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 8-14 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant believes all the pending claims are in condition for allowance and should be passed to issue. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would in any way expedite the prosecution of the application, please do not hesitate to call the undersigned at telephone (707) 543-0221.

Respectfully submitted,



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